

LESSON 15

WWISDOM OF SELF – CONTROL

Central Truth: God's Word requires believers to exercise self – control

Memory Verse: But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. - *Gal: 5:22-23*

LESSON TEXT

James 3:2-18; 4, 6

James 3:

2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.

4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind,

8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

----- Fellowship of the Spirit -----

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.

10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?

12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James 4

3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble."

INTRODUCTION

Being able to control what we say is a mark of self – control and spiritual maturity. The tongue is more than we can imagine. James described the power of the tongue in his letter to help us come to terms with the problems the tongue causes if not controlled. According to James the tongue has power to inflame passions. It contributes to our sinful acts and even sets our thoughts in that

----- **Fellowship of the Spirit** -----

direction, corrupting our whole lives with evil. Our lesson today is to help us exercise the Christian virtue of self – control in all endeavours and to submit ourselves to the discipline of God’s Word.

LESSON

The Apostle James began the chapter by admonishing those who teach in the house of God to understand their responsibility and discharge it appropriately because those who teach will be judged more strictly. James then moved from the teaching ministry to the self-control in relation to how we use the tongue. We are all likely to stumble in many areas but if we can control our tongue, so that we do not commit the various sins of speech then we can be seen as well-disciplined. If one can exercise control in speech, he should not have difficulty in practicing self-control in other areas of life as well. One way believers can sin is with their speech. The believer who controls his tongue is spiritually mature and can have control over other areas of life.

James describes the tongue as follows: First of all, he compared it to a bridle. Bridles hold the bits in the horses’ mouths. Though the bit itself is a very small piece of steel, yet if a person can control that bit, he can control the behaviour of the horse. In the same way the tongue can direct our life either for good or the evil.

Secondly, he compared it to a rudder (small wheel). A rudder is very small yet when it is turned; it controls the direction of the ship itself. Though the tongue is a very small member of the body, and relatively hidden, yet it can be used for both good and evil.

James also compared the tongue to a fire. The tongue is like a small lighted fire which has the potential to set a whole forest on fire. He then speaks of it as a world full of trouble. The tongue, though so small, has vast possibilities of trouble in it. A person can corrupt his whole personality by using his tongue to slander, abuse, lie, blaspheme, and swear. Self – control is an important characteristic for all believers. And one of the most important areas in which we need to exercise self-control in our speech. As believers, we need to make sure our speech builds up rather than destroy. For a believer to successfully control himself, he must avoid worldly wisdom and use godly wisdom. A person who claims to be a Christian but whose main goal in life is to fulfil his own desires is an enemy of God. God gives grace to those who will look to Him and humbly yield to His will. Those who are too proud to God’s will, would not experience His grace. Controlling our desires requires a humble spirit if we are to be God’s friend and not His enemy.

LIFE APPLICATION

The only way we control our speech is to make sure our hearts are right with God. When people say things against us, we must respond with a soft answer. Having self – control takes more than self – effort. As believers, self-control begins when we allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. The Holy Spirit will use God’s word to discipline us and teach us the right way.

The Holy Spirit might be speaking to you today because you have difficulty controlling your temper and your tongue. Ask God to forgive you. Yield to the discipline of the Word of God and Holy Spirit. When we walk according to God’s Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, the works of the flesh will not control our lives. God’s grace to help in every situation of life is available to all who turn to Him. This requires that we humbly submit every area of our lives to Him. Allow His grace to help.

1. How can controlling one’s speech be a witness for Christ?
2. How might a believer use the godly wisdom that James describes to solve a conflict in his family or church?
3. What difference can prayer make in controlling one’s desires?

----- DAILY BIBLE READING -----

- Monday – Resist Temptation (Genesis 39:2-12)
- Tuesday – Consequences of Yielding to Temptation (Joshua 7:16-26)
- Wednesday – Guard Your Heart (Proverbs 4:20-27)
- Thursday – Watch Your Mouth (Matthew 5:20-26)
- Friday – Be Disciplined (1 Corinthians 9: 24-27)
- Saturday – Think Right (Philippians 4:4-9)

----- Fellowship of the Spirit -----